implemented in all 'Metro' and Category 'A' service areas within six months of the award of the licence and in rest of the service areas within one year of the award of the licence. The tender for grant of MNP service licences has been floated on 25.11.2008 after following due procedure. As per the present schedule of events of the tender, the date for announcement of successful bidder(s) and issuance of Letter(s) of Intent is 05.03.2009.

Indians languishing in foreign jails

†*159. SHRI AVTAR SINGH KARIMPURI: Will the Minister of OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indians languishing in jails abroad, along with the details of the charges against them;

(b) the details with regard to their names, addresses etc., State-wise and district-wise; and

(c) the steps taken by Government to get them released from jails and the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF OVERSEAS INDIAN AFFAIRS (SHRI VAYALAR RAVI): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Sales tax on petro products

*160. SHRI MOHD. ALI KHAN: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal to cut sales tax on petro products to reduce their prices further;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) By virtue of entry 54 of List II of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, Sales Tax is a State subject. Any decision regarding reduction of Sales Tax has to be taken by the State Governments concerned.

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WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Handling of nuclear waste

1012. SHRI N.R. GOVINDARAJAR: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Sweden has offered to extend technical assistance in handling nuclear waste;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether estimated nuclear waste in India is 5,000 cubic metres of high level nuclear waste every year and additional thousands of cubic metres of intermediate and low level nuclear waste; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by Government for safe disposal of this N-waste?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Not applicable in view of (a) above.

(c) In India about 500-600 litres of high level waste is generated per tonne of spent fuel processed. Also about 1000 litres of intermediate level waste is generated per tonne of spent fuel. The quantities generated depend on the type of fuel, cooling period before reprocessing and the process adopted in the reprocessing plants. Low level nuclear waste is generated during normal operation and maintenance of nuclear plants. About 20,000-30,000 m^3 of low level nuclear waste is generated from a typical twin 220 Mwe PHWR nuclear plants per year.

(d) Radioactive liquid waste generated as high level, intermediate level and low level is managed safely by adopting following methods:—

High level waste is initially stored in high integrity tanks with arrangement for removal of heat generated due to decay of radionuclides. There is a three step approach followed world wide as well as in our country for management of high level waste. These steps are:—

- Waste is first converted into inert solid form using sodium borosilicate glass in furnaces at temperature 900 — 1000°c.
- As a second step, the solidified waste is stored in engineered facility for a period of 25 — 30 years to facilitate decay of radionuclides and surveillance.
- Finally, it is planned to transfer the solidified waste to a deep geological repository at a depth of 500 — 1000 metres to isolate the radioactivity from the environment.

Entire processing of high level waste is carried out in shielded rooms/containers using remotely operated gadgets. India is one of the seven countries in the world to have mastered the technology of high level waste management.

The intermediate level waste in India is provided treatment by ion exchange process using indigenously developed resin. Bulk of the activity is retained in the resin. The activity is eluted in very small volume and treated as high level waste. The low level waste generated during this process is treated separately. The used resins are embedded in cement matrix and managed as solid radioactive waste.

The low level wastes are provided treatment by various methods such as chemical treatment, evaporation ion exchange, etc., to retain bulk of the radioactivity. The liquid that brings radioactivity to very low levels after treatment is monitored and discharged to the nearby water body after dilution. The concentrates are immobilised in cement matrix and treated as solid radioactive waste.

Private sector's participation in nuclear energy field

1013. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government is intending to allow private sector participation in the area of utilization of nuclear energy;

(b) if so, the extent to which the participation would be allowed by Government and by when it would be allowed; and

(c) whether some private sector companies have shown interest in this field, if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE (SHRI PRITHVIRAJ CHAVAN): (a) and (b) Atomic Energy Act permits nuclear power generation by a Government Company in which at least 51% ownership is by Central Government. Private Sector participation in nuclear power generation at a larger level requires amendment of the Atomic Energy Act. All aspects of private participation in nuclear power including the nuclear fuel cycle management, safety and security issues, need to be evaluated before crystallising the policy in this regard.

(c) Private companies like Reliance Power, Tata Power, GMR Energy etc. have shown interest in this field. In addition, public sector company NTPC have also expressed interest. These companies have been advised to be associated with the Government company Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) in the first instance, to get experience in this field.

Coal supply to power plants

†1014. SHRI SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI:
SHRI MOTILAL VORA:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Coal India Limited has adequate reserves to supply coal to power plants of the country;

(b) whether it is a fact that due to acute shortage of coal in power generation stations in various States, power generation has gone down; and

(c) the quantity of coal imported by the Ministry from other countries during the year 2007-08?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.